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SUBJECT: MONTHLY POLITICAL ROUNDUP

REF: A. KIGALI 0002

[B](#). 2007 KIGALI 1113

[C](#). 2007 KIGALI 1092

Classified By: CDA Cheryl Sim, reason 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#). (SBU) This edition of the monthly political roundup includes:

- Rwanda's Fifth National Dialogue
- The Rwandan Patriotic Front's 20th Anniversary Congress
- Changes in NGO Registration Procedures
- The High Council of the Press "Validation Workshop"

President Chairs Fifth National Dialogue

[2](#). (SBU) From December 27-28, President Kagame chaired Rwanda's fifth National Dialogue. Senior GOR officials from all levels and branches of the Rwandan government discussed the state of Rwanda's economy, its education system, the prevalence of genocide ideology, the gacaca courts, the role of the Rwandan diaspora in Rwanda's development efforts, and performance contracts for Rwanda's 30 district mayors. On Rwanda's economy, the President formally announced the formation of an inter-ministerial team charged with addressing food self-sufficiency, value-added export products, affordable banking services, and responsible management of the environment. Commerce Minister Protais Musoni expressed confidence in Rwanda's ability to raise its productivity, engendering one of the Dialogue's few sustained debates, and called upon Rwandan enterprises to make use of TIG labor (community service for genocide convicts -- see ref B) as inexpensive and plentiful. Foreign Minister Murigande applauded the role of the Rwandan diaspora, for investing heavily in Rwanda's development, and sending tens of millions of dollars in remittances each year to family members.

[3](#). (C) Justice Minister Karugarama addressed reports of genocide ideology in the country (ref A), asking the Rwandan public not to judge the matter from recent press reports, but to be patient and allow time for proper inquiry and education. He announced that the government would revise the gacaca statute to allow for the transfer of category one genocide cases from the regular courts to gacaca courts. A Rwandan pastor and National Reconciliation board member called for "deep" reflection on genocide ideology and the impact of the gacaca judicial system on Rwandan families. He

raised the case of a young Hutu man, unable to attend school, his father in jail and his family having sold all its land to pay compensation to genocide survivors. Who would this young man listen to in the future, asked the pastor. No one responded to his call for debate. The Minister of Education missed the discussion of education issues, supposedly ill and unable to attend, although many assumed she avoided the Dialogue after her trying testimony at the Parliament, where she was heavily criticized for alleged lack of action against Hutu high school students threatening violence to genocide survivors and Tutsi students generally (ref A). Her deputy was booed several times as he presented his Ministry's plans for the future.

¶4. (U) Finally, President Kagame signed new performance contracts with Rwanda's 30 district mayors, after praising their performance in 2007, and noting that the mayors had on average achieved 85 percent of their development goals. This, said the President, proved critics wrong who complained that development activities centered on Kigali, at the expense of the countryside.

¶5. (C) Comment. Although President Kagame called for real debate at the Dialogue, no one amongst the assembled officials really spoke up on any sensitive issue, perhaps recalling what happened at the 2006 Dialogue, when debate was also encouraged. At that time, a member of Parliament had publicly accused several ministers of poor performance, only to be sharply reprimanded by Kagame. The courageous request by the pastor on the need for "deep" discussion of allegations of genocide ideology and the gacaca genocide trials -- suggesting that Hutu youths might be discouraged and open to divisive approaches -- went unanswered. End comment.

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) Holds 20th Anniversary Congress

¶6. (SBU) On December 29, the RPF held its seventh general congress, celebrating its 20 years of existence since its formation in Uganda in 1987. Representatives of other political parties attended the opening sessions, and offered solidarity messages to the assembled delegates. Liberal Party President and Minister of Commerce Protais Mitali commended RPF policy initiatives, and said that those who claimed there was no political space, "still have a lot to learn about Rwanda."

¶7. (SBU) President Kagame praised the cooperation among political parties, calling it "crucial" to Rwanda's development, while noting that others outside Rwanda meant to "destroy" the country (specifically naming Paul Rusesabagina, Partenariat-Intwari General Secretary Deo Mushayidi, and several others). The President also spoke disparagingly of "dissident" RPF members, who had joined the party only to further their own self-interest (note: this was considered a reference to former Director of External Intelligence Patrick Karegeya, who was released from a military prison in November, and who surreptitiously left Rwanda soon after - see ref C). If they try to attack the RPF, "they won't know what hit them," said the President. Kagame then called upon RPF members to be disciplined, and to understand that "no one is indispensable."

NGO Registration Procedures Changed

¶8. (C) In late December, the Ministry of Local Government (Miniloc), previously in charge of oversight and registration procedures for international and local NGOs, abruptly informed international NGO officials that all registration functions would be transferred immediately to the Directorate of Immigration and Emigration, a subset of the National Security Service. Officials at Care International and Catholic Relief Services told pol/econ chief January 1 that the change had taken them completely unawares, with no prior discussion or explanation of the transfer. The NGO officials felt some uneasiness, as they had built up good working

relationships with Minilloc officers, and regarded Minilloc Minister Protais Musoni as liberal in attitude and anxious to work closely with NGOs in easing registration red-tape.

¶9. (SBU) On January 2, a senior official at Minilloc confirmed that the transfer of registration functions to Immigration had been intended for some time, following a cabinet decision to do so in February of 2007. The intention was entirely benign, he claimed, motivated by the wish to establish a "one-stop shop" for NGOs, similar to the one-stop facility for foreign businessmen at the Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency. Previously, he said, international NGOs had to work with three separate entities, Immigration for visas, the Labor Ministry for work permits, and Minilloc for registration certificates. Now, he said, all would be done at Immigration. "People always need their visas first," he said, "and now it will all be done at one place." The official thought that officials from Minilloc and the Labor Ministry would "probably" sit at Immigration to assist with registration and work permit details. A meeting would be held in mid-January, he said, to explain the new policy.

High Council of the Press (HCP) Holds "Validation Workshop"

¶10. (SBU) In mid-December, the HCP held a "validation workshop" to examine its 2008-2012 strategic plan. Members of the local media, human rights organizations and the diplomatic corps attended, as well as officials from political parties and various government offices. The HCP proposed five "missions" for itself in the future: guaranteeing freedom of the press; establishing a sustainable media regulation system; capacity building at the HCP; media development and professionalism; and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the HCP. Most debate centered on press freedom, and the paucity of detail in the strategic plan on that "mission." While some participants (chiefly the Director of Communications at the RPF) opined that the HCP had no obvious role to play in protecting press freedom, as press freedom existed in abundance in Rwanda, others pressed for inclusion of specific activities for the HCP: conducting training sessions with police and civil defense forces; working to incorporate press freedom principles in school curriculum; and actively assisting journalists with legal advice on press freedom issues. Participants also agreed on the need for a dedicated "press freedom" section within the HCP.

¶11. (SBU) Comment. No real discussion occurred on the conflicting roles the HCP has set itself, monitoring the media while also supposedly promoting press freedom. However, while resigned to the HCP's role as press monitor, participants did make a number of useful suggestions on how the HCP could concretely work to assist freedom of the press.

End comment.

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